

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1616
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 2076

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - (FOR SECTION INFORMATION - SECTION 1 OF 2
)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR TS LY MASS
SUBJECT: VISIT BY UNDER SECRETARY HABIB TO TUNISIA

1. IN APRIL 12-14 VISIT TO TUNIS, UNDER SECRETARY HABIB RECEIVED EXTREMELY WARM WELCOME FROM GOT AND MET AT LENGTH WITH LEADING GOT OFFICIALS. HE MET WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA FOR FORTY MINUTES. PRIMIN NOUIRA FOR NINETY MINUTES AND FONMIN CHATTY FOR TWO HOURS. HE ALSO CALLED ON MINDEF FARHAT, MININT BELKHODJA AND SECTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TURKI. DISCUSSIONS FOCUSED ON MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, LIBYA, AND US-TUNISIAN RELATIONS.

2. MIDDLE EAST: PRESIDENT, PRIMIN AND FONMIN ALL URGED U.S. TO PLAY ACTIVE ROLE IN FINDING PEACEFUL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. IN THEIR VIEW, SOLUTION TO PALESTINIAN QUESTION IS OF OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE IF SETTLEMENT IS TO BE ACHIEVED; THEY STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA AND SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE. HOWEVER, THEY HAD NO CLEAR
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IDEAS TO OFFER ON MANNER IN WHICH PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE REPRESENTED AT GENEVA. THEY CLEARLY SUPPORTED SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE AND WERE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PALESTINIAN ASSOCIATION WITH JORDAN.

3. HABIB EXPLAINED THAT PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF HIS NORTH AFRICA TRIP WAS TO DISCUSS U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY AT REQUEST OF THE

SECRETARY WITH AREA'S LEADERS. SECRETARY HAD TRAVELLED TO MIDDLE EAST TO HEAR VIEWS OF BOTH SIDES AND PRESIDENT HAD ALREADY MET WITH RABIN AND SADAT AND WOULD BE MEETING WITH HUSSEIN, ASAD AND FAHD OVER NEXT SIX WEEKS TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS. FOLLOWING THESE MEETINGS AND AFTER ISRAELI ELECTIONS, SECRETARY HOPES TO MAKE ANOTHER TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST TO EXPLORE VIEWS FURTHER. U.S. ROLE IS TO FACILITATE THE RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OPPOSING SIDES. CONTINUING U.S. DISCUSSIONS WITH MIDDLE EAST LEADERS ARE INTENDED TO NARROW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONFRONTATION STATES IN ORDER TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND CONVENE GENEVA CONFERENCE, HOPEFULLY BEFORE END OF 1977. EXTENSIVE PREPARATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE SUCCESS AT GENEVA. HABIB STRESSED THAT U.S. HAD NO CURRENT PLAN FOR SETTLEMENT BUT IS TRYING TO GET INTERESTED PARTIES TO CONSIDER POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO KEY OUTSTANDING AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT. FOR ISRAEL THE NATURE OF PEACE IS MOST IMPORTANT, WHILE FOR ARABS BORDER AND PALESTINIAN QUESTIONS HAVE HIGHEST PRIORITY. HE ASKED FOR TUNISIAN SUPPORT FOR U.S. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

4. BOURGUIBA BRIEFLY REVIEWED HISTORY OF TUNISIA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY, DATING FROM HIS 1965. JERICHO SPEECH. HE CONFESSED TO CONSIDERABLE PRIDE IN FACT THAT ALL OTHER ARAB STATES, WHO HAD OSTRACIZED HIM ONCE. HAD NOW COME AROUND TO HIS CONCEPT OF PEACEFUL RESOLUTION IN ME. NOUIRA AND CHATTY AGREED WITH HABIB THAT PRESENT CONDITIONS AUGUR WELL FOR URGENT EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTIONS. SADAT NEEDS PEACE IN ORDER TO CONCENTRATE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EGYPT, SYRIA AND ISRAEL ALL FIND COST OF DEFENSE CONFIDENTIAL

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ESTABLISHMENTS BURDENSOME. THEY STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF SETTLING AS MANY QUESTIONS AS POSSIBLE BEFORE GENEVA CONFERENCE FORMALLY CONVENES BECAUSE OF EXTREME DIFFICULTY IN RECONVENING SHOULD CONFERENCE FAIL TO ACHIEVE SETTLEMENT. IN DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION, CHATTY SUGGESTED THAT ISRAELI SECURITY WOULD BE ENHANCED BY SEPARATE PALESTINIAN AND JORDANIAN STATES RATHER THAN BY CONFEDERATION OR SIMILAR UNITARY STATE. HABIB POINTED OUT THAT ISRAEL REMAINED OPPOSED TO INDEPENDENT, PROBABLY STRONGLY IRREDENTIST PALESTINIAN STATE BETWEEN ITSELF AND JORDAN.

5. AFRICA: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AFRICA WERE ALSO EXAMINED AT LENGTH. TUNISIAN LEADERS ARE VERY CONCERNED OVER CONTINUING INCREASE IN SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFRICA BOTH DIRECTLY AND BY MEANS OF CUBAN SURROGATES. THEY STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF THE U.S. PLAYING A DIRECT ROLE IN AFRICA. IN THEIR VIEW, NO OTHER WESTERN COUNTRY HAS AS MUCH INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT AS THE U.S. THEY EXPRESSED FULL APPROVAL OF MOROCCAN-FRENCH ACTION RE ZAIRE AND STRONGLY ENCOURAGED

U.S. TO PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT AND PLAY STRONGER ROLE IN ZAIRE
AND ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA.

6. HABIB ASKED PRESIDENT FOR HIS VIEWS ON CURRENT DETERIORATION
IN AFRICA BELOW SAHARA. PRESIDENT LAUNCHED INTO DISCOURSE ON
SOVIET MACHINATIONS IN AFRICA, CITING PODGORNYY VISITS, SOVIET
FLEET ACTIVITIES, AND CASTRO TRAVELS. HE BLAMED AMERICAN
"VIETNAM COMPLEX" FOR LACK OF FIRM U.S. HAND IN AFRICA. HE
MADE STRONG PLEA FOR U.S. TO MAKE ITS WEIGHT FELT ON THIS
CONTINENT. HABIB ASSURED PRESIDENT THAT SINCERE AND POSITIVE
U.S. POLICY WOULD BE FOLLOWED IN AFRICA, BUT NOTED AMERICAN
DESIRE TO FEEL THAT AFRICANS THEMSELVES WANTED AMERICAN
PRESENCE AND WERE WILLING TO DO THEIR SHARE IN THEIR OWN
INTEREST. BOURGUIBA ASSURED HABIB THAT, AMONG AFRICAN
STATES, PERHAPS ALL BUT THE FEW "MARXIST" RADICALS WANTED THE
U.S. AND FRIENDLY WESTERN NATIONS TO CONCERN THEMSELVES
WITH AFRICAN AFFAIRS.
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7. HABIB REVIEWED U.S. POLICY IN ZAIRE, RHODESIA, NAMIBIA AND
ETHIOPIA. HE STRESSED U.S. SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN NATIONALISM
AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF AFRICAN STATES TO WORK TOGETHER AGAINST
EXTERNAL INTERVENTION.

8. LIBYA: TUNISIAN LEADERS WERE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED ABOUT
SOVIET INFLUENCE IN LIBYA AND UNPREDICTABLE, AGGRESSIVE
NATURE OF QADHAFI REGIME, PARTICULARLY TOWARD TUNISIA.
WHILE TUNISIA WOULD PREFER TO DEVOTE ITS LIMITED RESOURCES TO
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HEAVY LIBYAN PURCHASES OF MODERN SOVIET
ARMS, INCLUDING MIGS AND SUBMARINES, HAVE FORCED TUNISIA
TO UNDERTAKE ITS OWN DEFENSE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. TUNISIA
HAS TURNED TO FRANCE, U.S., AND ITALY FOR ARMS.

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1617
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE

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9. DESCRIBING CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE AS SERIOUS, NOUIRA EMPHASIZED QADHAFI'S REFUSAL TO USE ICJ OR ALTERNATIVES TO ARBITRATE DISPUTE. TUNISIA IS FULLY PREPARED TO SUBMIT MATTER TO ARBITRATION BY EITHER APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATIONS OR TECHNICAL EXPERTS. HABIB ASSURED NOUIRA THAT U.S. WILL SUPPORT TUNISIAN EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF SHELF QUESTION.

10. CHATTY TOLD HABIB THAT QADHAFI DURING MARCH 29 TOBRUK MEETING OFFERED TUNISIANS LOAN OF 20 MILLION DINARS PER YEAR FOR NEXT FOUR YEARS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. CHATTY UNDERTOOK TO DISCUSS OFFER WITH HIS GOVERNMENT, BUT ASKED HOW TUNISIA COULD BE EXPECTED TO LIVE CONTINUALLY IN FEAR OF LIBYAN INVASION WHILE TAKING HANDOUT FROM QADHAFI. CHATTY SAW THIS AS AN EFFORT TO SIDETRACK CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE. HABIB ASKED WHETHER GOT FELT EGYPT WOULD EVENTUALLY USE FORCE AGAINST QADHAFI. CHATTY SAID THAT, WHILE HE DID NOT REALLY KNOW, IT MIGHT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES BE NECESSARY; HOWEVER, GOE HAD THREATENED LIBYA BEFORE AND HAD DONE NOTHING IN THE END. HABIB STRESSED THE VALUE OF EXCHANGING INFORMATION FREQUENTLY ON LIBYAN SITUATION. HE UNDERTOOK, UPON RETURN TO CONFIDENTIAL

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WASHINGTON, TO REVIEW LATEST INTELLIGENCE AVAILABLE TO U.S. AND WOULD TRANSMIT USEFUL ITEMS TO CHATTY THROUGH AMBASSADOR.

11. CHATTY TOLD HABIB THAT PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA RETURNED FROM MOSCOW CONVINCED THAT SOVIETS ARE GENERALLY ENCOURAGING QADHAFI IN HIS FOREIGN ADVENTURES, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE PROBABLY NOT COUNSELING HIM IN DETAIL IN EACH CASE AND PROBABLY NOT AT ALL IN HIS CONFRONTATION WITH TUNISIA. SOVIETS DECLINED TO DISCUSS CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE IN ANY DETAIL WITH TUNISIANS, CALLING IT "TOO COMPLEX" AND OF NO DIRECT INTEREST TO USSR.

12. U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE: MINISTER OF DEFENSE FARHAT REVIEWED TUNISIAN DEFENSE MODERNIZATION OBJECTIVES AND STRONGLY URGED USG TO PROVIDE EXPEDITIOUSLY MAJOR ITEMS OF

EQUIPMENT WHICH TUNISIA WISHES TO ACQUIRE UNDER FMS. TUNISIAN ARMED FORCES REQUIRE UPGRADING AND MODERNIZATION TO DEFEND AGAINST POSSIBLE THREATS FROM BETTER ARMED NEIGHBORS ALGERIA AND LIBYA. CURRENT DISAGREEMENT WITH LIBYA OVER CONTINENTAL SHELF UNDERSCORES URGENCY OF TUNISIA'S MILITARY EQUIPMENT NEEDS. TUNISIA THEREFORE HOPES USG CAN PROVIDE \$125 MILLION IN FMS CREDITS OVER NEXT FIVE YEARS. FORTHCOMING U.S. ASSISTANCE IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF TUNISIA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

13. FARHAT VOICED PARTICULAR CONCERN OVER DELAYS ENCOUNTERED IN ACQUISITION OF CHAPARRAL AIR DEFENSE MISSILES; HE ASKED WHETHER DELIVERY COULD BE EXPEDITED. HABIB UNDERTOOK TO LOOK INTO QUESTION AFTER RETURNING TO WASHINGTON. FARHAT RAISED TUNISIAN INTEREST IN REDEYE. HABIB EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH MANY COUNTRIES HAVE SOVIET STRELLA MISSILE, USG DOES NOT USUALLY SELL REDEYE BECAUSE OF CONCERN IT MAY FALL INTO TERRORIST HANDS. HE ALSO EXPLAINED THAT SALES OF MISSILES SUCH AS REDEYE PRESENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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INCLUDED IN GENERAL REVIEW OF ARMS SALES POLICY REQUESTED BY PRESIDENT. HE ASSURED FARHAT THAT U.S. RECOGNIZES TUNISIA'S STRATEGIC SITUATION AND INTENDS TO ASSIST TUNISIAN DEFENSE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, SUBJECT TO CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF ANNUAL APPROPRIATION REQUESTS. HE HOPED CONGRESS WOULD APPROVE \$25 MILLION IN FMS CREDITS FOR TUNISIA DURING FY 1978. HABIB AND FARHAT ALSO DISCUSSED U.S. POLICY ON SECURITY SUPPORTING ASSISTANCE, SALES OF SURPLUS SHIPS AND SHIFT FROM GRANT ASSISTANCE TO FMS CREDITS.

14. FARHAT ALSO DEPLORED CURRENT U.S. POLICY OF CHARGING FMS RECIPIENTS FOR REPLACEMENT COSTS OF EQUIPMENT, CITING CASE OF CHAPARRAL/VULCAN SYSTEM. GOT IS BEING CHARGED \$65,356 APIECE FOR CURRENT MODEL OF CHAPARRAL MISSILE INSTEAD OF ORIGINAL VALUE, WHICH THEY UNDERSTAND WAS CONSIDERABLY LESS. EVEN WITH MODEST SIZE OF DESIRED SYSTEM, TUNISIA IS BEING IMPOVERISHED BY SUCH POLICIES. HABIB WAS NOT SURE IF ANYTHING COULD BE DONE TO ALTER CURRENT POLICY BUT PROMISED TO LOOK INTO MATTER ON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON.

15. CHATTY EXPRESSED THE HOPE OF GOT THAT U.S. WOULD PROVIDE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE MILITARY AID TO TUNISIA. HABIB SAID HE HAD BEEN ALERTED TO POSSIBLE BUREAUCRATIC BLOCKAGES IN WASHINGTON CONCERNING PRICING AND DELIVERY OF FMS MATERIEL AND WOULD DO HIS BEST TO UNTANGLE THESE PROBLEMS. HABIB ALSO ASSURED CHATTY THAT WASHINGTON DEEPLY APPRECIATED PROBLEMS WHICH PEACEFUL TUNISIA WAS NOW FACING FROM ITS

UNSTABLE, UNPREDICTABLE NEIGHBOR QADHAFI.

16. JOINT COMMISSION: CHATTY EXPRESSED GOT PREFERENCE FOR HOSTING NEXT JOINT COMMISSION MEETING AFTER PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA'S WASHINGTON VISIT. HABIB, WHILE AGREEING THAT SUCH SEQUENCE ALSO STRUCK HIM AS MOST ADVISABLE, SAID THAT SCHEDULE FACING SECRETARY MIGHT INDICATE REVERSE ORDER FOR VISIT AND JOINT COMMISSION. IN ANY CASE, HE FELT IT CONFIDENTIAL

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WOULD BE JULY OR AUGUST BEFORE WE COULD BE READY TO FIX DATES FOR JOINT COMMISSION.

17. INVITATION TO NOUIRA: INVITATION ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT TO PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA TO MAKE OFFICIAL VISIT TO U.S. EITHER LATE THIS YEAR OR EARLY 1978 WAS EXTENDED. NOUIRA EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION AND AGREED THAT FURTHER ARRANGEMENTS AND DATES FOR VISIT WOULD BE DISCUSSED IN WASHINGTON WITH AMBASSADOR HEDDA. HABIB ALSO INFORMED BOURGUIBA OF INVITATION AND REGRETTED THAT PRESIDENT HIMSELF COULD NOT TRAVEL AGAIN TO U.S.

18. U.S.-TUNISIAN FRIENDSHIP: PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA REVIEWED HISTORY OF CLOSE TUNISIAN-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP DATING FROM WORLD WAR II AND GENEROSITY OF U.S. IN ASSISTING TUNISIA'S DEVELOPMENT. HE ASSURED HABIB THAT CLOSE RELATIONS WOULD ALWAYS CONTINUE. HE ASKED UNDER SECRETARY TO CONVEY HIS WARMEST GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT CARTER, SECRETARY VANCE, AND FORMER AMBASSADOR ROBERT D. MURPHY. ANDERSON

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